



Notice of a Virtual Public Hearing with In-Person Option

**Notice
Virtual Public Hearing with In-Person Option
US 281 (MILITARY HIGHWAY)
From FM 732 to FM 1421
CSJs: 0220-04-049 & 0220-04-050
Cameron County, Texas**

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) is proposing to reconstruct and widen US Highway (US) 281 (Military Highway) from approximately 0.3 miles west of Farm-to-Market (FM) 732 to 0.18 miles west of FM 1421 in Cameron County, Texas. This notice advises the public that TxDOT will be conducting an online virtual public hearing on the proposed project with an in-person option. **The virtual hearing will consist of a pre-recorded video presentation and will include both audio and visual components. The presentation will be posted online by Wednesday, October 12, 2022, at 5 p.m.** To log onto the virtual public hearing, go to the following web address at the date and time indicated above: www.txdot.gov, and type "US 281 Military Highway" into the search box. Project staff will give a presentation consisting of a pre-recorded video with both audio and components. Please note that the presentation will not be available on the website until the time and date listed above. If you do not have internet access, you may call Ezekiel Gonzalez, P.E., at (956) 702-6209 between the hours of 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, to ask questions and access project materials during the project development process.

Additionally, TxDOT is providing an in-person option for individuals who would like to participate in person instead of online. In-person attendees will be able to view the same presentation delivered in the online public hearing which will be playing on a screen, review hard copies of project materials, ask questions of TxDOT staff and/or consultants, and leave written comments. **The in-person option will be held on Thursday, October 13, 2022, from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. at the La Encantada Elementary School cafeteria at 35001 FM 1577, San Benito, Texas 78586.**

For both the virtual public hearing and in-person option, members of the public may call (956) 215-8305 to provide verbal testimony immediately following the conclusion of the virtual public hearing presentation at 7 p.m. on Wednesday, October 12, 2022, through 11:59 pm on Friday, October 28, 2022. Formal written comments may also be provided by mail or email as explained below. All verbally provided testimony and timely written comments will be considered by TxDOT and included as part of the official record. Responses to verbally provided testimony and comments will be prepared by TxDOT, included as part of the hearing and project record, and made available online at www.txdot.gov, keyword search "US 281 Military Highway" in the search box.

The proposed project activities would consist of reconstructing and widening the existing two-lane rural US 281 (Military Highway) to a four-lane rural highway with a left-turn lane and shoulders. The proposed right of way varies between 121 feet and 146 feet and would require approximately 3.1 acres of new right of way. The proposed roadway facility would include four 12-foot travel lanes with two travel lanes in each direction and 8-foot shoulders on each side of the roadway. The proposed roadway facility would also include a 14-foot turn lane. The proposed drainage within the project area would be a roadside open ditch with equalizer culverts beneath the roadway.

The proposed project would, subject to final design considerations, require additional right of way and potentially displace two residential outbuildings (carports) and two commercial structures. No residential displacements would occur as a result of the proposed project. Relocation assistance is available for displaced persons and businesses. Information about the TxDOT Relocation Assistance Program and services and benefits for those displaced and other affected property owners, as well as information about the tentative schedule for right-of-



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way acquisition and construction, can be obtained from the TxDOT district office by calling Horacio Elizondo, Jr., at (956) 702-6350.

The proposed project would acquire right of way from Don Jose Esparza Park at the intersection of FM 1577 and US 281 (Military Highway). A total of 0.0725 acres of the park property adjacent to the US 281 (Military Highway) right of way would be required to construct the proposed improvements. No recreational structures associated with the park will be impacted. Don Jose Esparza is a neighborhood park with an outdoor pool, basketball court, picnic tables, and shade trees. TxDOT anticipates making a *de minimis* determination for this use under Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966. Public comment on the effects of the proposed project on the activities, features, or attributes of Don Jose Esparza Park may be submitted as described below. This public hearing also satisfies the requirements of Chapter 26 of the Parks and Wildlife Code.

Three wildlife crossing structures are proposed to be constructed beneath the roadway and adjacent to the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Lower Rio Grande Valley National Wildlife Refuge (LRGVNWR). The proposed project would involve construction in wetlands and involve an action in a floodplain.

Any environmental documentation or studies, any maps and drawings showing the project location and design, tentative construction schedules, and other information regarding the proposed project are on file and available for inspection Monday through Friday between the hours of 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. at Ezekiel Gonzalez, P.E., at (956) 702-6209. Project materials are also available online at www.txdot.gov, keyword search: "US 281 Military Highway". These materials will also be available in hard copy form for review at the in-person option.

The virtual public hearing and in-person option will be conducted in English. If you need an interpreter or document translator because English is not your primary language or you have difficulty communicating effectively in English, one will be provided to you. If you have a disability and need assistance, special arrangements can be made to accommodate most needs. If you need interpretation or translation services or you are a person with a disability who requires an accommodation to attend and participate in the virtual public hearing or in-person option, please contact Norma Robledo at the TxDOT Pharr District at (956) 702-6161 no later than 4 p.m. CT on Friday, October 7, 2022. Please be aware that advance notice is required as some services and accommodations may require time for TxDOT to arrange.

Written comments from the public regarding the proposed project are requested and may be submitted by mail to the TxDOT Pharr District Office, 600 W. I-2, Pharr, Texas 78577. Written comments may also be submitted by email to nolan.nicolas@txdot.gov. **All written comments must be received on or before Friday, October 28, 2022.**

If you have any general questions or concerns regarding the proposed project virtual hearing or in-person option, please contact Norma Robledo at (956) 702-6161 or norma.robledo@txdot.gov.

The environmental review, consultation, and other actions required by applicable Federal environmental laws for this project are being, or have been, carried-out by TxDOT pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 327 and a Memorandum of Understanding dated December 9, 2019, and executed by FHWA and TxDOT.